

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Kevin Buchanan

(559) 822-2332

2,000 Mile Trip for National Symbol

Bald Eagles from Northern Canada Choosing Millerton Lake As Winter Home

FRIANT – California State Parks announced today that a significant number of Bald Eagles from the frozen wilderness of Northern Canada are returning year-after-year to make Millerton Lake State Recreation Area their winter home. This information comes from years of study on the migration patterns of the eagles, many of which were fitted with telemetry devices to track their migratory movements.

“We are delighted by this odyssey. Their annual wintertime return to Millerton Lake and nearby environs is cause for celebration,” said Mike Smith, a naturalist with State Parks. “How fortunate we are that these magnificent creatures have consistently chosen our backyard for their winter home. In recent years, Millerton Lake has become the premier destination for viewing Central California’s wintering Bald Eagles. We strongly urge people to take advantage of this opportunity and make a trip to the lake to view them in their natural wintertime surroundings. It is a sight to behold.”

Special Bald Eagle Tour for Press

Who: All interested press

When: 9 a.m. – Friday, December 16, 2005

Where: Meet at historic Millerton Courthouse, travel to lake and tour of Bald Eagle habitat areas aboard the To’quill, a 30 foot pontoon boat State Parks’ uses for interpretation cruises. Please call for directions.

What: You’ll view Bald Eagles in the wild and learn about their role in the ecology of Central California.

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Since the winter of 1984, Millerton Lake State Recreation Area has offered the public guided boat tours of the lake for the purpose of viewing Bald Eagles in their natural wintertime habitat. Because of the lake's proximity to a major metropolitan area, many of our guests are surprised to learn of their presence. We frequently hear comments like this from our visitors: "I know they're in Alaska, but I never realized they were this close to Fresno;" and "Bald Eagles this close to Fresno? I never knew that." Surprise, however, quickly gives way to astonishment when park naturalists share the findings of a five-year Millerton Lake SRA Bald Eagle Capture and Telemetry Study.

Between January 1998 and February 2002, sixteen Bald Eagles were captured at Millerton Lake and fitted with backpack telemetry devices. Twelve of these eagles were given satellite transmitters which permitted us to learn about their annual migratory movements - movements which were previously unknown to us and indeed to the entire scientific community. For many of these eagles, Millerton Lake represents the terminus of a nearly 2,000 mile migration from the frozen Canadian wilderness to the foothills of the Sierra.

For additional information or to reserve your seat aboard To'quill, please call: (559) 822-2332.

If you plan to attend be prepared for cold weather. Dress warmly and dress in layers. Hot chocolate, coffee and tea will be served midway through the tour.

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